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ORIGINS OF THE MEDIÆVAL KINGDOM

Byzantium alone fulfilled, in its time, a vital need in the social economics of world-history. For in the centuries of barbarism, turmoil, incessant petty carnage, Byzantium was a fortress, a preserve of cultured settled life. But already when the Ottoman and Romanov Empires were rising up, fortresses were becoming out of date.

And so the achievement of the Byzantines was to perpetuate the essentials of urban civilization—through the long centuries between the end of the Classic world and the first birth-pains of the modern world. That stately city straddles history. For Byzantium was founded less than fifteen hundred years after the Dardanians and Phrygians, Mysians and Bithynians rode against the kingdoms of the Bronze Age; and when at last it fell, the Cabots and Caxton had been born and the Paston boys were at Eton.

The Georgians emerge clearly into the light of the new Oriental world of the eighth century, and their history is henceforward well-documented—if not, even now, adequately edited.

Some early sources of the Georgian Annals date back to this period; Armenian chroniclers from the eighth century onwards are numerous and overlapping; and Byzantine historians and Arab travellers concern themselves considerably with the Caucasus. The Georgians bordered on the two contending Imperial powers of the early Middle Ages. The Arabs held Iran and eastern Trans-Caucasia and dominated the sea-ways of the Caspian eastward to Central Asia and northward to the half-civilized Turkish kingdoms on the Volga. The Byzantines held the Black Sea coastal regions, and their colony of Kherson—successor to the old Hellenic cities on the north-eastern coast of the Black Sea—controlled the trade between Asia and the rising Slavonic principalities in South Russia.

The survival of the Georgians, not only as a people but as an individual cultural and political whole during these centuries of aggressive Imperial intervention from west and east and of formidable sporadic attack from nomads—Khazars, Turks and Mongols—is remarkable.

There is a curious element in the character of the Georgian people, a kind of irresponsible individuality of the nation as a unit, which is comparable to a somewhat similar individuality which may be observed in the national characters of both the Spaniards and the Irish.

This characteristic of the Georgian people may be described as an æsthetic irresponsibility. Thus the Georgians,

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186 like the Spaniards and the Irish, have come under many forms of alien political and cultural coercion. They accept this domination, but they do not take it seriously, and when the domination passes the people that have suffered it remain in character much the same as formerly. It would be untrue to say that they do not resist such domination; they frequently resist it savagely, but they resist as a nation, as a living animal, and their resistance is not for a principle. Thus we find throughout the history of Georgia, as of Spain and of Ireland, that it is the nation that is held sacred and not this or that principle. And if one people or the other has fought with ostensibly religious aims, it will be found that it is because the religious cause represented the national cause. The Georgians are not a religious people, neither are they a political people, but they have a very strong and abiding sense of their community as a nation, and their individuality as a nation. This sense of national individuality is very old—far older than the clamant sense of nationhood which is voiced by so many of the comparatively young European nations. The Georgian sense of themselves as a nation certainly dates from the time of the mediæval Georgian kingdom, and it is voiced by Rusthaveli and others of their mediæval poets.

The sense of nation is in itself a kind of æstheticism—a form of sensual taste—a preference for one's kind in contrast to other kind.

On the other hand no man—or no people—of essential æstheticism, of taste, can conceive a fixed preference for a certain religious or political conception. Martyrdom is essentially a breach of æsthetics, while heroism on the other hand is an orgasm of individualistic artistry. Thus we find that the Georgians are often, indeed always, heroes and never, or very seldom, martyrs.

186 157 In this "*æsthetic irresponsibility*" of the Georgians lies the secret both of their charm as a nation and of their survival as a strongly individualistic national unit. The Georgians retain in a remarkable degree, both individually and as a people, the clear and gentle outlook, the free and inquiring intelligence and the high amoral and untrammelled mind of primitive man. The generosity, the loving simplicity and the humanity, the animal love of life which characterizes the Homeric poems and the ancient literature of the Celts and Scandinavians lights the pages of the mediæval Georgian epics and declares indeed the mind of the Georgian of these days.

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It is this "*æsthetic irresponsibility*" which has secured the integrity of the Georgians through the vicissitudes of their history. Many political systems and many creeds have lain heavy on the country. They have passed away, and the Georgian has remained, laughing, easy, unchanged and untroubled.

The remoteness of the geographical position of the country has been one of the fundamental causes of the strong sense of kind—of national individuality—of the Georgians. This remoteness has at once isolated them and caused them to develop a sentiment of long and ancient and independent communion among themselves.

At the same time the climate is a mellow joyous climate and the wine is good, so that neither the air nor the diet are conducive to the worrying over principles and the gnawing over grievances.

The unfortunate Armenians, on the other hand, nursing hard dogma upon their icy uplands, made material in their bleak economic want, have as a nation come very near at times to that physical extinction which usually awaits the martyr, and to that cultural extinction which falls to the lot of a community composed of individual materialists. For during the early Middle Ages the Armenians fought doggedly against the Muhammadan invaders as the enemies of the Christian religion and they entered with enthusiastic heat into the interminable theological disputes that rent the East Christian world. But the individual materialism which is inherent in men born in a sterile unfriendly land always drew off the most vigorous spirits of each succeeding generation into the services of rich masters—Byzantine, Arab, Mongol and Turk. Thus we may view upon a very broad and general background of the history of these peoples—the Georgians in their broad and mellow land, with their troubadours and light philosophies, their joistings, their drinking-bouts, their heroes and their games; and the Armenians, a dour and dogged yet self-pitying people, with their dogmas and their rites, their monkish chroniclers, their hard soldiers, their merchants and their martyrs.

The mediæval Kingdom of Georgia struck the imagination of Western travellers, Marco Polo, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo and others, as an isolated community of Western culture and Christian religion surviving in the midst of powerful Mussulman tyrannies and half barbarous tribes and peoples. And we now may marvel less at the military prowess which main-

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signed only after some hesitation. This manifesto marked the actual beginning of a determined Russian Transcaucasian policy.

A large number of Russian revolutionaries came to Georgia immediately after its annexation and spread their influence among the Georgian intelligentsia. Quite a number of these aristocratic Russian revolutionaries, who later participated in the December rising of 1825, served on the staff headquarters of the Caucasian Army Corps under General Yermolov, the uncrowned king of Georgia between 1816 and 1827. Recent Soviet historical writers have emphasized Yermolov's progressive trend of thought and have given him credit for many positive things achieved in Georgia under his proconsulate. Thus the first Georgian newspaper was published in Tiflis under Yermolov in 1819, which was the more remarkable since there existed then but three provincial newspapers in the whole of the Russian Empire, namely in Kharkov, Kazan and Astrakhan.[21]

All these historical facts constitute the basis of that concept of Georgian-Russian brotherhood which contributed to the formation of the political personality of Stalin perhaps as much as Marxist-Leninist theory. The encouragement which Stalin, the Georgian, gave to Russian nationalism, the demonstrative tribute which he paid to the Great Russian nation can only be understood if the Russian-Georgian associations in the past are taken into account. From the point of view of Stalin and of the Soviet régime, the historic Russian-Georgian brotherhood offers an excellent argument for the thesis that the Georgians ought willingly to accept dependence on Moscow.

That, however, is not the conclusion which Georgian nationalists might wish to draw from Georgian history. Without denying that Christian Russia played the role of Georgia's protector against such mighty oriental powers as Persia and the Ottoman Empire, they might consider that this protection has come to an end. Indeed, no powerful Shah or Sultan is likely to threaten the Georgian State in future, or try to Islamize it. Nor can gratitude for the beneficial effects of Russian culture on Georgia during the nineteenth century in any way interfere with Georgia's political orientation in the twentieth century. Georgian nationalists can only too easily make the point that classical Georgian literature borrowed a great deal from Persian literature, without the Georgians having ever felt any debt of gratitude towards Persia for that reason.

For the Georgian nationalists who tried to build up an independent Georgian State after the Russian October Revolution, neither Istanbul nor Teheran was the real danger, but communist Moscow.

[Cf. cat. 116, pp. 223-225, R1 Soviet Union A1: Kolarz--Analyst]

TRANSCAUCASIA

J.U. 563 648 [208] The Soviet Government remembered very conveniently,* that there were old Georgian national claims against Turkey which Bolshevism had persistently ignored during 27 years, but which could easily be revived to embarrass the Turks. Two Georgian professors, S. N. Dzhanashia and N. Berdzenishvili, started the job by publishing a long learned article in the Tiflis newspaper *Kommunisti* on December 14th, 1945. In this article, entitled 'Our Lawful Demands to Turkey', the two Georgian historians claimed for Georgia all territories which Georgia had lost from the Middle Ages onwards. They included, in particular, a coastline 170 miles long on the Turkish shores of the Black Sea.

Ge. 186 648 [814]

The Georgian professors said 'We appeal to world public opinion concerning our ancient lands wrested from us by Turkey. This is not a matter of an insignificant territorial infringement, but of the seizure from us of the cradle of our individuality as a nation; of a crime which cut in two the living national body. . . . The Georgian people must get back their lands which they never gave up and cannot give up'.[28]

The world outside Georgia would never have learned of this re-birth of an outspoken Georgian national imperialism, had not the Moscow newspaper *Pravda* reprinted the entire article in Russian translation a few days later.

Ge. [538] What the historians had started was carried on by poets and playwrights. Thus Grigol Abashidze, co-author of the Georgian national anthem, wrote a collection of poems, *On the Southern Border*, in which he passionately advocated the reunion of the Georgian territories of Turkey with the Georgian motherland. North-Eastern Anatolia appears in Abashidze's poetry as the Georgian Province of 'Tao'. In one of his poems Abashidze promised that 'Tao' including the two ancient cultural centres of the Georgian people, Khandzta and Tbeti, would become Georgian again:

Ge. [539]

Tao, O Tao, our country thou,
Cradle thou of Georgian glory!

Ploughland of my forebears' furrows,
Brooded o'er by ancient towers,
How wast thou beset by sorrows
'Ere decay befell thy flowers!

Tao, O Tao, I hear thee, Tao,
Hear thy weary sighing dying.

Khandzta weeps and Tbeti murmurs;
Brothers' hearts there turn towards us.
One day Tao will join our numbers
'Neath the flag that proudly guards us.

* [i.e. in launching a "diplomatic offensive against Turkey after World War II - Analyst]

For this and similar lyrical expressions of irredentism Abashidze was awarded a Stalin Prize for 1950. The same honour was bestowed on the Georgian playwright, Ilo Mosashvili, for the play *Sunken Stones*, which deals with the national aspirations of the Georgian inhabitants of an imaginary Turkish town not far from the borders of the U.S.S.R. The title of the play refers to the ruins of an ancient Georgian church, a national shrine of the local Georgians, which the Turkish authorities dismantle by night, throwing the débris into the sea. The play was shown in all the leading theatres of Georgia.

In the past the Soviet Government cared as little for Georgian as for Armenian national aspirations. In 1921 it had ceded to Turkey some of the territories which the Georgians have demanded since 1945. During the inter-war period any mention of the Georgian claims against Turkey would have been tantamount to high treason, since it would have disturbed Soviet-Turkish relations. Nevertheless, the Soviet régime showed an ambiguous attitude towards Turkey even in the period of the Bolshevik-Kemalist honeymoon. Almost from its inception the Georgian Soviet Republic included a small special territorial unit which, in itself, constituted a challenge to the Turks. This territorial unit is called Adzharistan or Adzhar A.S.S.R. It is situated in Georgia's south-western corner and covers but a tiny territory of 970 square miles. Adzharistan which consists of the port of Batum and its surroundings, was incorporated into Russia in 1878 after Turkey had held it since 1625. From a Georgian national point of view this conquest was of great significance, since it was the first of those vast formerly Georgian Black Sea territories which Russia succeeded in wresting from the Turks.

Though the population of these ancient Georgian territories, which reached as far as Trebizond, was forced to accept the Moslem religion, many continued to speak a Georgian dialect. Georgian nationalists, who called the lost Georgian lands 'Moslem Georgia', or 'Turkish Georgia', and their inhabitants 'Moslem Georgians', or Lazi, claimed that Russia, in her treaty with Irakli II, had pledged herself to strive for the reunion of Georgia with the lands which had belonged to her of old. The treaty did indeed contain a clause which might have been interpreted in such a way. Imperial Russia was in no way inclined to satisfy Georgian national demands. She was interested in Batum because it was an excellent sea-port and, later on, the terminus of the oil-pipeline running from Baku to the Black Sea, and not because Georgian nationalists cherished the idea of Batum's annexation.

The idea of annexing more Turkish Black Sea coastal territories by using Batum as a springboard for further conquests was not alien to Czarist policy. But this was *par excellence* a Russian imperialistic idea which totally disregarded any specific Georgian national interests. The development of Batum from a wretched little place with 1,500 inhabitants

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and one stone building – the house of the Russian consul – in the year of annexation, to a port of international importance ten or fifteen years later certainly helped to raise Russia's prestige in north-eastern Turkey. The Russian scholar, N. Y. Marr, who in 1910 travelled in Lazistan, 'Turkish Georgia', noted that Russia enjoyed a fairly good reputation among the Lazi; at the same time he was unable to trace any pan-Georgian feelings among the latter. He found that the Lazi were actually dying out.[29] Notwithstanding the evidence supplied by Marr, Georgian nationalists continued to talk of 'Turkish Georgia', which included, they said, as many as 600,000 Georgians. During the First World War these nationalists formulated, indeed, territorial demands for large stretches of land along the Black Sea coast, including areas to the east of Trebizond.[30]

Soviet estimates about the number of 'Turkish Georgians' were for a long time rather cautious. A textbook published in 1949 said that there were 'not less than 200,000' of them, but three years later the Soviet Encyclopædia asserted that there were 'over 500,000'.[31]

ABKHAZIA

In the early years of the Georgian Soviet Republic Stalin tried to enlist the small national minorities of Georgia in the fight against the communist leadership in Tiflis. Stalin then complained of the 'harmful and dangerous chauvinism' of the Georgian communists who thought 'there was no need to reckon with less cultured and less developed nationalities'.[32] The minorities whom Stalin had in mind were the Georgian Moslems (also called Adzharians), the Ossetins and in particular the Abkhazians.

In the middle of the nineteenth century the Abkhazians found themselves in a difficult situation. They had been exposed to colonization from two sides and had become part of both the Great Russian and the Georgian living space. In these circumstances thousands of Abkhazians thought it preferable to leave their homeland for Turkey rather than to wage a hopeless struggle against the dual Russian-Georgian pressure. Although the Georgian nationalists and 'National Bolsheviks' disliked the idea of an Abkhazian autonomy, an 'Abkhazian A.S.S.R.' was nevertheless established within the Georgian S.S.R. on the insistence of the Moscow Government. In 1926 Autonomous Abkhazia covered 3,240 square miles and had a population of 174,000 of whom the Abkhazians accounted for less than one-third.

The Abkhazians, though useful as long as they could be played up against the Georgians, lost favour with the central Government as soon as their national interests clashed with those of the Soviet Union as a whole. This happened when, under the Second Five-Year Plan, Ab-

[Medieval Georgia]

THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

795 771 With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom was divided, the authority of the Church became divided too.

795 771 793 The writ of the Catholicos of Mtzkheta ceased to extend beyond Kartli. The King of Imereti revived the Catholicosate of Abkhazeti which henceforward exercised a shadowy authority over the Western Caucasus and the Rioni valley; and in Kakheti the Bishop of Alaverdi, in Mingrelia the Metropolitan of Bedia, in Guria the Bishop of Shemokhmedi, followed the separatist tendencies of the local rulers. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by or conferred as rewards upon the relatives of the different ruling princes. The nobles, demoralized by the humiliating political conditions, which often compelled them to embrace Islam, to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harîms, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating with admirable impartiality the feast-days of both.

The Kartlian kings were frequently required by the Shahs to profess an outward devotion to Islam, and Pitton de Tournefort gives us an amusing picture of the religious exercises of the ruler, contemporary with his visit.

> "Le Prince de Tiflis", he says, "étoit du Rite Grec, mais on l'obligea de se faire circoncire. On dit que ce malheureux professoit les deux religions, car il alloit à la Mosquée et venoit à la Messe chez les Capucins, où il beuvoit à la santé de la Saintête." [1]

771 196 Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this, in reality, took the form of national feeling against the Persians and Turks.

[1] Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant* (Paris, 1717), tome II, p. 310.

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[Medieval Georgia]

RELIGION

At the end of the seventeenth century, in Tiflis, Persian preparations to build a mosque could still arouse enough resentment to provoke a riot.[1]

A few of the rulers, particularly in Kartli and Kakheti, made some efforts to maintain their spiritual integrity in spite of adverse political conditions. The heroic Queen Ketevani of Kakheti, an elderly woman, suffered torture and execution in the Shah's prisons rather than abandon her faith, and King Wakhtang VI of Kartli preferred to relinquish his throne rather than conform outwardly—as many of his predecessors had done and his successors would do—to the Islamic creed. But amid the inconsequent but sturdy adherence of the peasantry to the faith of their fathers and their nation, and the courageous fidelity of an occasional ruler in the Georgian Kingdoms, the generality of the nobles and the priests led a spiritual life of irresponsible depravity.

Chardin, who bases his account upon personal observation and upon the manuscript made for him by Brother Zampi, a Théatin of Mantua who had lived for twenty years in Georgia, gives a lamentable account of the state of the Christian religion in Mingrelia.

> "The priests of Mingrelia", he says, "are very numerous; and a sort of miserable creature that live upon whatever they can get. . . . There needs no more than to be able to read and say a Mass by Heart, to be admitted into the Priesthood. . . . Nor is it to be imagined how the Priests are contemn'd and scorn'd. . . . Now that which

> causes this contempt is their ignorance their Gluttony and their Poverty. Their Poverty is so great that they go Barefoot, and in Tatters that hardly cover their Tails. . . . There are but few churches which have any Bells, but they call the people together by knocking with a good big Stick upon a Board. . . . The Parish Churches are more

[1] Chardin (1686), pp. 209–10.

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181 had its very individual aspects. The Georgian feudal monarchy through all its vicissitudes retained the tradition of an antique and continuing civility and something of this continuing civility had come down from the period of the Achæmenians and maybe from the centuries before the Swarming Time from Khaldi and the forgotten Caucasian kingdoms of the Bronze Age.

The habit of a settled life, possession of wealth, no little splendour, the mind of kingship, all were old in Georgia. And of all the antique spontaneities, of all the back-dating, free and individual upgrowths of Western Asia, the Georgian nation had alone contrived continuing survival. For the Armenians in the eleventh century were finished as an independent social body.

● 186 Therefore, the Georgians, in tradition, culture, sense of nationhood, were apart from the moving, scarcely conscious mass of the Muslim peoples around them. And they were by far ahead of, different from, the new raw peoples forming into nations, in Russia, Hungary and the Balkans. The Georgians had an aristocracy of their own blood, and kings the same, a political fact not common over all the variegated mosaic of Europe of the twelfth century. But with all the strong marking of their early come-by individual nationhood, the Georgians were in close and running contact with the two living cultures of the mediæval world, Christendom and Islam, and the mind of their rulers—in constant dangerous intimacy with the great Imperial powers in Byzantium and Persia—could never afford to be parochial.

565 644 The Georgian nobles were typical of the feudal classes over all the mediæval world—hard-living, turbulent, superstitious and amoral. To them, life was an affair of forays, huntings, joustings, quick come-and-go of looted wealth, abundant wine and easy women. And they cowered before the Church, as even the best of them trembled and marvelled at the tricks and contortions of astrologers, magicians and dervishes.[1]

Yet these truculent soldiers, princes of the mountains, were at the same time wealthy gentlemen and dilettanti, who followed the fashions of Byzantium, not only in dress and ceremonial like the aristocracies of the Balkan and Danubian lands, but in tastes, in art and books. David Soslani, the swashbuckling husband of Tamara who could give a village

[1] Cf. Brosset, *H. de la G.*, I, 329 and 460 *et seq.*, for accounts of sorceries in mediæval Georgia. Even by Tamara, Evlogi, "the madman of Christ", was regarded with respect.

[Constitution as of July, 1947]

Chapter XIII. Language, Arms, Flag and Capital

191 [563] Art. 156. The state language of the Georgian SSR is Georgian. National minorities living in the territory of the Georgian SSR are guaranteed the right of free development and use of their native language both in their cultural and political institutions.

Art. 157. Laws, as well as decrees and explanatory texts of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR, decisions and orders of the Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR are published in the Georgian language, and in the Autonomous Republics and the Autonomous Region - in the Georgian language and the language of the Autonomous Republic or the Autonomous Region.

Art. 158. Laws, and likewise decrees and explanatory texts of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviets of Autonomous Republics, decisions and orders of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republics and decisions and orders of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Working People's Deputies of the Autonomous Region are published in the language of the Autonomous Republic or the Autonomous Region and in the Georgian language.

● 186 Art. 159. The arms of the Georgian SSR are a round red field in the upper part of which is a five-pointed star with rays reaching out into the whole field, and in the lower part a snowy mountain range of blue colour, with gold ears of grain on the right and gold vines with grapes on the left. The gold ears and vines are intertwined at the base of the mountains in the lower part of the field. A large part of the center is occupied by a sickle and hammer of gold which reaches at the top into the shining star, at the bottom - into the peaks of the mountain ranges, and on the sides - into the ears and vines. The field is surrounded by an inscription in the Russian and Georgian languages "Workers of All Countries, United!" The arms are surrounded by a pattern of ornament in the Georgian style.

Art. 160. The flag of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic is of red cloth with the inscription in gold letters in the Georgian language "Georgian SSR" in the upper left corner, within a square the sides of which are equal to one quarter of the entire width of the flag.

Art. 161. The capital of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic is the City of Tbilisi.

Chapter XIV. Procedure for Amending the Constitution

642 Art. 162. The Constitution of the Georgian SSR may be amended only by decision of the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR adopted by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the votes of the Supreme Soviet.

000 Note: This translation was made from a Russian text published by the Publishing House "Zarya Vostoka" in Tbilisi in 1947, and apparently approved by the Secretary of the Presidium on June 22, 1948.